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August 30, 2006

Detroit's poverty rate is No. 2 in U.S.

City trails only Cleveland as 31.4% of households earn less than \$19,350, the U.S. poverty threshold.

David Josar / The Detroit News

DETROIT -- In less than a year, east side resident Consuelo Carson went from being a \$12-an-hour practical nurse who had just bought her first home to an unemployed single mom struggling to feed her two kids on \$389 a month in food stamps.

"It changed so fast," said Carson, 25, who explained that repeated medical problems after the birth of her second child caused her to lose her position. "The jobs just aren't out there anymore."

U.S. census figures confirmed what Carson and social service workers already knew: Times are tough in Detroit, where 3 in every 10 people live in households earning less than \$19,350, the federal poverty threshold.

In 2005, the poverty figure was 31.4 percent -- more than twice the 13 percent of Michiganders and 13 percent of all Metro Detroiters in those straits. In 2000, 26.1 percent of Detroiters were in poverty.

Detroit was edged out by Cleveland as the nation's poorest major metropolitan city, although the Census Bureau, which released new income figures Tuesday, noted that estimates for Cleveland and Detroit were not significantly different. Cleveland had 32 percent of its 452,200 people living below the poverty level in 2005.

As bad as Detroit's numbers sound, it's worse in Flint. The median household there earns nearly \$2,000 a year less than in Detroit, and one-third of all households live in poverty.

Driving Detroit's troubles is Michigan's lagging economy, the lack of post-high school career placement services and the high cost of utilities and gasoline, social workers and others say.

"People just can't pull themselves up without help," said Jerutha Kennedy, the unit director for the Neighborhood Service Organization's Harper-Gratiot Multi-Service Center.

"The safety net that was there is harder to find."

At the social service center where Kennedy works, for example, funding cuts eliminated a GED program, and an office that provided job training and employment services has left.

Meanwhile, it has become easier, as the 25-year-old Carson discovered, to fall from the middle class into poverty, Kennedy said.

There are fewer entry level jobs, and even the resources to steer people into training for skilled trades are vanishing.

"The access is just disappearing," Kennedy said.

Carson said she applies for several jobs each week, but nothing comes through.

"The competition is hard; there are so few jobs," said Carson, who added the only recent break she had was when the food stamps for her 11-month-old and 4-year-old were doubled.

Retired Internal Revenue Service worker Millie Stewart had been doing fine living on about \$900 a month she got from her government pension and Social Security, until her daughter became too ill to care for her three children.

So Stewart took in the two teenage girls and her 8-year-old grandson and rented, for \$450, a house in the Brightmoor neighborhood. She gets roughly an extra \$200 every two weeks from the state for caring for her grandchildren, but the money doesn't go far.

She's making ends meet by going to church-operated food pantries, using vouchers from private nonprofits for clothing and occasionally getting a check from her son in California.

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Flint tops poverty list --Census

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, August 30, 2006

By Ron Fonger

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FLINT - Flint has become the poorest large city in Michigan, with nearly one of every three people now living below the poverty level, according to a new Census Bureau report.

Flint's percentage of residents living in poverty last year increased from 26.4 percent in 2000 to 32.5 percent in 2005, passing Detroit (31.4 percent) and putting it far ahead of other Michigan communities with at least 65,000 people.

The report came as no surprise to some of those who work with the poor in Flint and have seen the concentration of poverty rise with the loss of good-paying jobs.

"This city is in need of a prayer being answered," said Flint native Patrick McNeal, a pastor who runs My Brother's Keeper, a Flint shelter for homeless men. "(Poverty is) going to continue to inch upward (because) there's really very few jobs where people can make a livable wage."

In Genesee County as a whole, however, the percentage of people living in poverty dropped from 17 percent in 2004 to 15.9 percent in 2005.

"We have fewer people living in the city, and the people being left behind are the people with the least ability to relocate," said County Treasurer Daniel T. Kildee. "When people who are working leave the community, it increases the percentage (of people in poverty)."

The Census Bureau report said 37 million people (12.6 percent) were in poverty nationwide in 2005. Both the number and the rate were statistically unchanged from 2004, according to a news release.

Michigan's poverty rate rose from 12.3 percent in 2004 to 13.2 percent in 2005.

The poverty threshold for a family of four in 2005 was a household income of \$19,971. It was \$15,577 for a family of three, \$12,755 for a family of two and \$9,973 for unrelated individuals.

But even amid the rise in poverty, household income in Michigan rose from 2004 to 2005, recovering somewhat from earlier declines.

The Census Bureau report shows the state's median household income increased

QUICK TAKE

Here are the estimated poverty rates as of 2005 in large and mid-sized cities in Michigan:

Ann Arbor 22.3 percent

Canton Twp. 4.3 percent

Clinton Twp. 10.9 percent

Dearborn 17.8 percent

Detroit 31.4 percent

Farmington Hills 4.1 percent

Flint 32.5 percent

Grand Rapids 20.8 percent

Kalamazoo 30.2 percent

Lansing 24.4 percent

Livonia 2.5 percent

Pontiac 22.7 percent

by more than \$1,100 to \$46,039. The median household income is the level at which half of households make less and half make more.

Census records show that Michigan's median household income has had its share of peaks and valleys in recent years, inching up to \$45,688 in 2001 but then dropping to \$44,315 in 2002. In 2003, it jumped up to \$46,291 but sank again in 2004 to \$44,905.

"You could have a blip up in the median income in the last year, but was it a significant increase or just a blip?" asked Sharon Parks, a spokeswoman for the Michigan League for Human Services, a Lansing-based anti-poverty group. "What's more important is the poverty rate. It's an indication of the level of need out there that is not being addressed. It should serve as a real wake-up call."

Joe Conroy, an aide to Flint Mayor Don Williamson, said he would want more information about poverty rates in cities similar to Flint - such as Saginaw and Battle Creek - before commenting in detail.

Information from those cities was not included in the Census Bureau report.

Conroy said Flint's economy has "bottomed out and will go forward."

"We think the answer to this for the most part is to try to develop the jobs the community has (lost) because General Motors has gone from 83,000 (employees) to probably 10,000 to 12,000," Conroy said.

The Census Bureau last year said Detroit was Michigan's poorest city, with a 33.6 percent poverty rate. Detroit's rate dropped in the new report. Flint wasn't included in last year's report, but its poverty rate rose sharply since 2000.

Rochester Hills 4.7 percent

Shelby 6 percent

Southfield 8.9 percent

Sterling Heights 8.2 percent

Troy 5.3 percent

Warren 11.7 percent

Waterford 8.2 percent

Westland 9.8 percent

Wyoming 12.6 percent

Source: U.S. Census

Capt. John Williams, Genesee County commander for the Salvation Army, said it's not just raw percentage but the type of people drifting into poverty and asking for help that is alarming.

"Almost 70 percent are first-time clients asking for help," said Williams. "These are not people who don't have jobs, ... (but) they are working jobs paying \$7 an hour instead of \$20 an hour."

The Salvation Army helps pay utility bills, operates food pantries and offers mortgage and rent assistance to keep families in their homes.

Williams said he sees promising things in Flint, but expects several years of struggle ahead.

The community has not given up on trying to help people in poverty, he said.

"I see a community that reaches out and helps a lot more than I see (elsewhere)," he said. "There's a lot of hurt, but I see a lot more people willing to help."

McNeal said so many people have contacted him recently that the board that oversees his shelter is looking for ways to open it all year.

It isn't expected to reopen until November.

"I've had more people contact me in the last two months than have the last four or five years," he said. "That really says something."

The Census Bureau also released information on health insurance coverage, showing that the number of Michigan citizens without health insurance was 11.4 percent in 2005, compared with 11.6 percent in 2004 - a minor change, but analysts say it reverses the trend of increases in recent years.

Observers said the slight improvement in health coverage might come from the fact that the number of

Michigan residents covered by Medicaid, the federal-state health program for the poor, is at a record-high 1.5 million.

Other findings in the report include:

- Livingston County had a median household income of \$71,546 in 2005 - the highest among counties surveyed (those with populations of 65,000 or more). Rounding out the top five were Oakland, \$64,022; Clinton, \$59,495; Ottawa, \$56,984; and Monroe, \$55,663.
- The poverty rate for children 18 years and younger was the highest in Berrien County in southwest Michigan with 30.6 percent. The rest of the top five were Wayne, 29.1 percent; Van Buren, 25 percent; Saginaw, 24.9 percent; and Genesee, 23.6 percent.

Demographers urge caution in interpreting the data, noting that it is difficult to measure changes between years since the bureau has used different surveys over the years. That could increase the margin of error in the results.

Information from The Journal's Lansing Bureau is included in this report.

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Published August 30, 2006

Census: 24.4% of Lansing in poverty

2005 data show city's rate nearly double averages for U.S., state

By Stacey Range
Lansing State Journal

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One in four Lansing residents is living in poverty, a rate nearly double the national and state averages, according to data released Tuesday.

But the bad news isn't limited to the urban core's poorest: New U.S. Census Bureau numbers show households throughout the tri-county saw earning power tumble in the past five years.

"It's been a gradual slide into poverty," said Sharon Parks of the Michigan League for Human Services. "The erosion of manufacturing jobs, growth in lower-wage jobs, high unemployment. All people are feeling it."

Michigan's adjusted median household income - the level at which half households earned more and half earned less - dropped more than \$200 below the national median last year, coming in at \$46,039 compared with the national figure of \$46,242.

The statewide poverty rate also rose, from 10.5 percent to 13.2 percent.

In Ingham County, the median household income dropped \$5,260 from 2000 to 2005, ending at \$42,502 - nearly \$4,000 below the national average, and \$3,537 below the state average.

Eaton County recorded the largest loss, dropping from \$58,087 in 2000 to \$47,335 last year. Clinton County saw a smaller decrease, from \$61,857 to \$59,495.

The figures were released as part of the American Community Survey, an annual snapshot of the country and selected communities with populations of 65,000 or more.

Ingham poverty high

Of the 23 Michigan counties surveyed, Ingham County had the fourth-highest concentration of poverty with nearly 19 percent of residents living below the poverty level. That's far higher than the

state average of 13 percent. The three counties with higher rates were Isabella, Wayne and Berrien.

Eaton County had 11 percent of its population in poverty, Clinton County had 9 percent.

Isabella County had the highest poverty rate of 24 percent. Livingston County had the lowest at 4.4 percent.

The data don't surprise Patrick Patterson. The vice president of operations for the Volunteers of America's New Hope Day Center in Lansing sees the numbers take human shape daily.

"People are running out of money," he said. "There are a lot of people living on the line here."

While the data paint a grim picture for Michigan, the news was better for the nation.

Income up 1.1% in U.S.

As a whole, the median household income in the United States rose last year for the first time since 1999.

Median household income climbed 1.1 percent to \$46,326 between 2004 and 2005.

The proportion of impoverished Americans also dropped, from 12.7 percent in 2004 to 12.6 percent last year. The change, although not statistically significant, represented the first drop in the poverty rate since 2000.

Still, some 37 million Americans lived in poverty last year, defined by the Census Bureau as below \$10,000 for an individual or below \$20,000 for a family of four.

Numbers shape policy

The official poverty level is used to decide eligibility for federal health, housing, nutrition and child care benefits. The poverty rate - the percentage of people living below poverty - helps shape the debate on the health of the nation's economy.

The poverty report comes 10 years after the 1996 welfare overhaul, which required millions of poor, single mothers to work and which set limits on how long recipients could get monthly checks.

The data the Census Bureau released Tuesday are different from that obtained in the long-form questionnaire that went to about one in six addresses in the 2000 census. The annual American Community Survey will replace the 10-year census by 2010 and track changes in demographic, socioeconomic and housing data more frequently.

It is designed to provide more frequent updates to help governments and other agencies plan and allocate resources.

The survey estimates are based on an annual, nationwide household sample of about 250,000 addresses per month, or 2.5 percent of the population a year.

Smaller cities will be counted again in 2010, and then will be included in the annual counts.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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A growing worry: The poor children

Access to good nutrition, health care often is lacking

BY AMBER HUNT

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

August 30, 2006

The Michiganders hit hardest by the rising tide of poverty aren't only laid-off workers. They're also the kids.

Consider these numbers:

- In Michigan, there were about 353,000 poor children in 2000; in 2005, there were an estimated 459,000 -- a 30% increase.
- Macomb County's number of poor children jumped nearly 10,000 -- from 13,500 to 23,000, a 70% increase.
- Troy had a 340% increase -- from 459 poor children to 2,021.

Just two Michigan communities ranked by the U.S. Census Bureau's American Communities Survey saw a drop in the number of children living below the poverty level. Those towns, Farmington Hills and Livonia, dropped 64% and 10%, respectively.

A family of four is considered to live below the poverty level if its income is \$19,971 or less.

Michigan's overall increase is not surprising, said Sharon Parks, vice president for policy at the Michigan League for Human Services.

"Given the unemployment rate ... and then looking at the children, their parents are more likely to be in lower-paying jobs," she said.

The data were released Tuesday by the Census Bureau and included Michigan communities with populations of 65,000 or more. The comparison data are from the long-form 2000 census, which the new survey is set to replace in 2010.

The number of children in poverty in Oakland County rose by about 4,800, or

24%; Wayne County had an estimated 26,600 more poor children, a 20% increase.

In many cases, an increase in overall poverty coincided with an increase in poor children. For example, Clinton Township had a 96% jump in its overall poverty rate. It also recorded 120% more poor children from 2000 to 2005.

Michele Corey, director of community advocacy for Michigan's Children, said the census numbers mirror those released in the national Kids Count data book earlier this year that compared poverty rates in 2000 with 2004. A 30% increase put Michigan just below the national median.

"Michigan is clearly on a different trajectory than the rest of the country," she said. "Particularly disconcerting is the impact of poverty."

That includes how it relates to child abuse, neglect, malnutrition and access to overall care.

"The resources are not available in so many areas, in nutrition and health care, and other things like books and learning tools in the home," Parks said.

Children raised in homes that fall below the poverty level also are more likely to move often, meaning they lack stability outside of the home.

"It shows a weakening in our social safety net," Parks said. "We are not well-positioned as a state to turn the poverty numbers around."

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A MICHIGAN CENSUS SNAPSHOT: More feel pain of tight economy

**BY MARISOL BELLO, SUZETTE HACKNEY, DAN CORTEZ and
AMBER HUNT**

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITERS

August 30, 2006

In a dramatic sign of its ailing economy, Michigan's household income dropped, more children joined the ranks of poor people and the number of people living below the poverty level jumped in the suburbs, according to census figures released Tuesday.



In Roseville: Dave Bowling has turned to a county agency to help him with bills after he was laid off from his job in Warren. "There's a lot of people going through a lot of tough times," he said.
(DAVID P. GILKEY/Detroit Free Press)

The figures show Michigan's median household income fell more than any other state's during the last six years. It was \$46,039 in 2005 -- 12% less than what it was in 1999 when adjusted for inflation. None of the 28 counties and 21 municipalities for which data were reported showed a rise in median household income between 1999 and 2005, the estimates show.

The news was grim in other areas, too. In 2005:

- 19% of children in Michigan lived in poverty, up from six years ago.
- Almost a third of the state's African Americans lived below the poverty level.
- Detroit remained one of the poorest big cities in the country with almost a third of its residents living below the poverty line.
- Cities and townships posted drops in median household incomes ranging from 24% to 6% and poverty rates increased in all but three cities.

"I hate to superimpose worse news on top of bad news, but this is not a cycle," said David Littman, a senior economist for the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, a Midland-based think tank. "We're in a secular decline here in Michigan. As the economy slows nationally, we're going to sink much farther relative to the other states. We've only just begun.

"We're going to see Michigan sink to levels that no one has ever seen. We're going to be looking at the highest unemployment rates in the nation for the next five to 10 years."

"Nine percent of Michigan's labor force was unemployed, up from 6% six years ago, the data show. Nationally, the unemployment rate was 7%.

"We don't need another report to tell us Michigan has been challenged by economic global problems," said Liz Boyd, spokeswoman for Gov. Jennifer Granholm, who is facing a tough election in which the state's economy will play a significant role. "There are many instances where the numbers are bleak, but I think we also might be detecting there are some signs of some good news when comparing Michigan to other parts of the country."

Boyd said the governor has been pushing to create jobs and develop job-training and other programs to help lift people out of poverty.

The hard numbers bear out what metro Detroit and Michigan residents have experienced as many teeter between financial survival and financial ruin. As the auto and manufacturing industries putter along, people are not only losing their high-paying jobs, but they are also losing their homes to foreclosures and being forced to take lower-paying work.

The income numbers were coupled with poverty data showing that in metro Detroit communities such as Troy and Clinton Township, the number of people living below the poverty level -- making less than about \$20,000 for a family of four -- has about doubled in the last six years.

The number of children under 18 living in poverty in those same cities also jumped during that time. For example, 459 children lived in poverty in Troy six years ago. By 2005, that number leaped to 2,000, according to the new census estimates.

Detroit, with 31% of its residents living below the poverty line, remains one of the poorest big cities in the country, neck and neck with Cleveland at 32% of its residents living in poverty.

Matt Allen, spokesman for Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, said the mayor acknowledges the tough issue of sustained poverty and is reviewing programs to promote job training and draw more businesses to the city.

"But these are issues that just don't affect the City of Detroit, though we may have larger numbers as they relate to comparable cities. These are things that need to be addressed at a national level with real dollars and programs for the impoverished," Allen said.

Kurt Metzger, a demographer and research director for the United Way for Southeastern Michigan, said, "You expect this economy to have impacted the State of Michigan and this region. But what's interesting to see is how this economy has really found its way into what is not considered your typical poor. Poverty is finding its way into the lower middle class and middle class."

Now, those who never thought they would, are looking for financial help.

The stress from his wife's unexpected death in July left Dave Bowling unable to work. He was laid off from his job at Eastern Michigan Industries in Warren, where he fabricated auto parts and made \$70,000 annually.

Now the Roseville father of three teenage daughters is living off his \$1,400 a month unemployment check. Bowling, 39, doesn't know when he'll be able to return to work, but the bills are mounting. He couldn't afford his last house payment.

"There's a lot of people going through a lot of tough times," Bowling said as he fidgeted with his cell phone.

He has become reliant on the Macomb County Community Services Agency, which helped him with a house payment. The agency helps residents with food, clothing and bills.

"If it weren't for them, we'd be out on the streets," Bowling said.

In the tri-county area, Macomb County saw the biggest jump in the number poor people. Six years ago, 44,000 people lived in poverty in the county, but the latest estimates show that number jumped to almost 71,000.

Frank Taylor knows there are more county residents slipping into poverty. He's the director of the county's Community Services Agency, which assists residents with food, clothing and utility bills.

"We can't meet the demand for services," Taylor said Tuesday. "The middle class is being squeezed. "

But like elsewhere in the state, the increased demand couldn't come at a worse time for the county. The agency is under orders to cut 3% from its budget and has already shrunk through attrition with some staff taking on additional responsibilities.

"I'm not sure how long we're going to be able to weather the storm," Taylor said. "We don't want to adversely affect our services."

April Fowlkes, 27, of Detroit is no stranger to living below the poverty level. She lives with her parents and for the last five years has worked two days a week.

On Tuesday, she applied for full-time work. She isn't picky, she said, though she'd like to find a day job so she can keep playing football for the Detroit Demolition, the city's independent women's football league. The league practices at night and has eight regular season games, two playoff games and one championship game a year.

"I could work general labor," she said. "I'm a fast learner, so I could take something that requires a lot of skills that I can learn fast."

She's not alone. Almost 72,000 people are unemployed in Detroit -- about 21% of its workforce. That's more than any Michigan city profiled in the latest census estimates.

Fowlkes said she's hoping her job-seeking efforts pay off -- and soon.

"All you need is a chance," she said.

Contact **MARISOL BELLO** at 313-222-6678 or m bello@freepress.com. Staff writers Victoria Turk and Gina Damron contributed to this report.

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Bigger share of blacks than whites feels pinch

BY SUZETTE HACKNEY

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

August 30, 2006

Arthur Haggerty knows he's not an anomaly in Michigan. He's one of the 410,244 black residents in the state who are poor.

In fact, nearly one-third of all African Americans in Michigan are living below the poverty line. According to new U.S. Census data released Tuesday, the percentage of poor blacks was three times that of whites statewide in 2005 and in many metro Detroit communities.

Living below the poverty level is defined by the federal government as receiving an income of just under \$20,000 a year for a family of four. For individuals like Haggerty, the income threshold is \$9,973.

"All jobs don't pay \$20 an hour, and if you don't have a skill, you're not going to get anything but minimum wage -- if that," said Haggerty, a Dearborn Heights resident. "But I do think that we as a people have to be held accountable. There are programs where you can go and learn a trade. We need to get off drugs. Some of this is self-inflicted, and we need to do better."

Haggerty, 50, receives \$575 a month, or \$6,900 a year, in Social Security disability benefits. He used to drive trucks for various Eastern Market vendors before he was injured in 2001. Now he's trying to start an antiviolence campaign for Detroit's youth.

"My rent is \$300. After I pay my phone and cable bill, I don't have nothing," he said. "I just try to take care of my basic necessities and make a difference."

- Like Haggerty, other Wayne County blacks struggled financially, with 31% of them living below the poverty line compared with 10% of whites and 18% of Hispanics.

- In Oakland County, 13% of African Americans and Hispanics were impoverished, compared with 5% of whites.

- And 21% of Macomb County's black population lived in poverty compared with

7% of whites.

- In Detroit, 32% of the black population lived in poverty, compared with 26% of whites and 23% of Hispanics.

There is a direct link between the poverty level and joblessness in the region and state, economists say. Unemployment rates increased dramatically in many counties, according to census numbers, with the largest jump in Detroit, where 21% of all residents were not working in 2005.

N. Charles Anderson, Detroit Urban League president and chief executive, pointed to a lack of jobs -- even low-paying ones -- limited transportation to get to jobs and challenges with education and literacy as reasons for the large number of African Americans living in poverty.

But Anderson also blamed another culprit: racism.

"Even though it still causes the hair to raise on the back of some folks' necks, you have to look at racism as a factor," he said. "Historically and now, opportunities are not easily come by for some."

Contact **SUZETTE HACKNEY** at 313-222-6614 or shackney@freepress.com.

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One black man's opinion: We must be accountable

Despite low income, he tries to make impact

BY SUZETTE HACKNEY

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

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KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

Median income up, but so is poverty

Wednesday, August 30, 2006

By Sarah Kellogg

Gazette Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- Despite Michigan's sluggish economy and sputtering job market, household income in the state increased between 2004 and 2005, recovering somewhat from earlier declines.

A U.S. Census Bureau report released Tuesday shows that the state's median household income increased by more than \$1,100 between 2004 and 2005, to \$46,039. The median household income is the level at which half of households make less and half make more.

In Kalamazoo County, the median household income in 2005 was \$44,166. The Census Bureau didn't survey Kalamazoo County in 2004.

Median household income in 2005 was \$46,672 in Allegan County and \$39,783 in Van Buren County, according to the Census Bureau report. Data were not released for counties with fewer than 65,000 people and were unavailable for Barry, Cass and St. Joseph counties.

"While Michigan's economy has been pretty stagnant, it's not really a poor state," Dana Johnson, chief economist for Comerica Bank in Detroit, said of the household income uptick, noting that Michigan's household income was fairly close to the national median of \$46,326 for 2005.

"Once we get the automobile sector more stabilized, Michigan will start growing again and continue to look a lot like the rest of the nation," Johnson said. "I don't think we need to panic and say that somehow Michigan is not able to compete."

Census records show that Michigan's median household income has had its share of peaks and valleys in recent years, inching up to \$45,688 in 2001 and then dropping to \$44,315 in 2002. In 2003, it jumped up to \$46,291 but sank again in 2004, to \$44,905.

Poverty rates increase

The median income news was tempered by data showing Michigan's poverty rate rising from 12.3 percent in 2004 to 13.2 percent in 2005. Kalamazoo County's poverty rate, at 15.6 percent, was above the state's rate and the national rate, which held steady at 12.6 percent.

The poverty rate for Allegan County was 9.7 percent, according to the Census Bureau report. It was 17.3 percent for Van Buren County, which also had the state's third-highest child poverty rate, covering children 18 years or younger, at 25 percent.

Minor change in insurance

The bureau also released information on health-insurance coverage showing that the number of Michigan residents without health insurance was 11.4 percent in 2005 compared with 11.6 percent in 2004 -- a minor change, but analysts say it reverses the trend of increases over the past few years.

Observers suggest that the slight improvement in health coverage might come from the fact that the number of Michigan residents covered by Medicaid, the federal-state health program for the poor, is at a record high of 1.5 million.

The two reports released by the bureau -- the economic sections of the American Community Survey and the Current Population Survey -- are snapshots in time, basically illuminating economic data at one specific time.

Demographers urged caution in interpreting the data, noting that it is difficult to measure changes between years since the bureau used different surveys over the years. That could increase the margin of error in the results. The surveys also only cover counties and cities with populations of more than 65,000.

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County holding its own as poverty rates rise

Wednesday, August 30, 2006

By Sarah Kellogg

Washington Bureau

Jackson County families seem to be holding their own as Michigan wallows in the economic doldrums, but poverty rates for individuals have soared over the past five years.

Meanwhile, median household income in the county is actually above the state average.

That's the mixed message coming from the U.S. Census Bureau in its American Community Survey for 2005 released Tuesday.

According to the bureau's profile of the county, 4.7 percent of families were living below the poverty level last year, which is below the national average of 5 percent.

In 2000, that number was 6.5 percent, compared to the national average of 9.2 percent, according to the bureau.

Ken Toll, executive director of United Way of Jackson County, said tough times may result in fewer impoverished people marrying, which pushes up individual rates.

He said the numbers understate the situation in Jackson County.

"The requests for utility assistance, food and other help are up all across the board," Toll said.

The poverty rate for individuals was nearly triple the numbers recorded five years ago, however.

The 2005 number for those people was 25.0 percent, compared to a national average of 21.3 percent.

Five years ago those numbers were 9 and 12.4 percent, respectively.

Despite Michigan's sluggish economy and sputtering job market, household income in the state increased between 2004 and 2005, recovering somewhat from earlier declines.

The Census report shows that the state's median household income increased by more than \$1,100 between 2004 and 2005 to \$46,039. The median household income is the level at which half of households make less and half make more.

"While Michigan's economy has been pretty stagnant, it's not really a poor state," Dana Johnson, chief economist for Comerica Bank in Detroit, said of the household income uptick, noting that Michigan's household income was fairly close to the national median of \$46,326 for 2005.

"Once we get the automobile sector more stabilized, Michigan will start growing again and continue to look a lot like the rest of the nation," Johnson said. "I don't think we need to panic and say that somehow

Michigan is not able to compete."

Census records show that Michigan's median household income has had its share of peaks and valleys in recent years, inching up to \$45,688 in 2001 and then dropping to \$44,315 in 2002. In 2003, it jumped up to \$46,291 but sank again in 2004 to \$44,905.

In Jackson County, the median household income was \$47,053 in 2005; five years ago it was \$43,171.

Toll said the county may be benefiting from new housing developments that are drawing higher-income people into the area.

"That's going to raise median household income, or keep it propped up," he said. "That's offsetting what's happening at the lower end.

"To infer from that data that things are OK would be a mistake."

The median income news was tempered by data showing Michigan's poverty rate rising from 12.3 percent in 2004 to 13.2 percent in 2005. The national average was stagnant at 12.6 percent in 2005.

The poverty rates in a number of Michigan counties were significantly higher than the statewide average in 2005. Isabella County in mid-Michigan had the highest rate at 24.2 percent, followed by Wayne (19.5 percent), Berrien (18.9 percent), Ingham (18.8 percent) and Saginaw (17.5 percent).

Yet some Michigan counties are doing fairly well. Median household incomes are significantly above the state average in a handful of counties.

Livingston County had a median household income of \$71,546 in 2005 -- the highest of those counties surveyed. The remaining four in the top five were Oakland (\$64,022), Clinton (\$59,495), Ottawa (\$56,984) and Monroe (\$55,663).

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County gets poorer, older

Wednesday, August 30, 2006

JOE SNAPPER

THE SAGINAW NEWS

There are lots more college students, far fewer preschoolers, slightly older people and more of them all living in poverty in Saginaw County than six years earlier, data from the federal government show.

The U.S. Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey suggests Saginaw County is at the mercy of broader trends driven by national economic factors and the slow spiral of all manufacturing towns bleeding jobs, experts say.

Most troubling, the percentage of families in poverty rose to 12.4 percent from 11 percent in 1999. Broken down further, the rate for families with children under 18 rose to 20.3 percent from 17.4 percent; but those with children under 5 actually fell to 18 percent from 25.3, the data show.

Since 1999, the median age in Saginaw County has increased by 18 months, to 37.8 years from 36.3 years, the figures released Tuesday show, reflecting de-industrialization in the nation's manufacturing belt that has long fueled an exodus to the South and West in search of work, a demographics expert said.

"Those individuals who go have tended to be younger individuals," said Evelyn D. Ravuri, Saginaw Valley State University assistant professor of geography. "Those who stay behind tend to be older."

"It's not surprising the median age is getting higher. Michigan is not a very attractive state for, say, the 20- and 30-year-olds."

That's not stopping the "baby boomlets" from taking Saginaw County college classrooms by storm. SVSU welcomed its largest freshman class ever this fall, reflecting a 13 percent rise in college or graduate school enrollment.

But over the same six years, nursery and preschool numbers dropped 14 percent, kindergarten plummeted 34 percent and elementary levels slid 9 percent. By contrast, high school levels jumped 16 percent, data show.

"As the baby boomers -- those born between 1945 and 1964 -- as they aged, they did have some children, not as many, and those are baby boomlets. If their parents are 50 or 45, then they are in high school or college," Ravuri said.

As for the dearth of enrollment among younger students, national population trends may not tell the whole story. The state's loss of college graduates and young professionals who would otherwise have started their young families here also is perhaps a factor, Ravuri said.

Although median household incomes rose in the past six years, to \$39,957 from \$38,637, when adjusted for inflation those incomes actually lost \$5,336 in real dollars, Bureau of Labor Statistics calculations show.

Inflation has gone up 17 percent in that span, and Saginaw County isn't feeling the pinch alone, said Jason Palmer, an analyst with the state Department of Labor and Economic Growth in Saginaw.

"Remember that's happening in the United States as well," Palmer said. "Everyone's losing buying power."

Mimicking urban hubs elsewhere, the number of commuters dove to 80,734 from 89,177 just six years ago, a 9.5 percent slide, showing many laborers prefer to drive farther at higher gas prices than live closer. In this data a Saginaw County commuter is defined as someone who both lives in the county and drives to a job in the county.

"We see this trend happening in Detroit as we see people moving out of the cities, actually commuting a farther distance," Palmer said. "That's one side of the coin. But there's also been some job losses, so there's fewer jobs to commute to." v

Joe Snapper is a staff writer for The Saginaw News. You may reach him at 776-9715.

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Ricky's health will be issue in trials

Experts to say boy may have been underfed

By Kevin Grasha
Lansing State Journal

Published August 30, 2006

Two forensics experts can testify at Tim and Lisa Holland's trials about how Ricky Holland's development may have been stunted by malnutrition, a judge ruled Tuesday.

The Williamston couple is charged with child abuse and murder in the death of their 7-year-old adopted son. Jury selection in Lisa Holland's trial is scheduled to begin Sept. 11; Tim Holland's is set for next year.

Prosecutors are expected to try to show at trial that Ricky was being starved.

Defense attorneys for both Tim and Lisa Holland were seeking to suppress testimony about the boy's physical development.

Dr. Todd Fenton, a forensic anthropologist who examined Ricky's remains, said at a pretrial hearing before Ingham County Circuit Judge Paula Manderfield that the boy's skeleton indicated he was two years younger than his actual age.

"Ricky's bone length is significantly delayed," Fenton said Tuesday, adding one possible explanation was malnutrition.

He estimated Ricky's "skeletal age" - based on standard rates of growth and development - at 5 or 6 years old.

Ricky's femur, for example, measured 260 millimeters, but the mean for a 7 1/2-year-old is 301 millimeters.

Lisa Holland's co-counsel Andrew Abood said Fenton's testimony was just speculation.

"Nobody is going to be able to say that the delay was caused by ... malnutrition or something

Lisa Holland did," he said.

Testimony at the Hollands' preliminary hearing earlier this year revealed Ricky often was hungry and broke into neighbors' houses to rummage for food.

"When you starve a kid, they don't grow," Assistant Prosecutor Mike Ferency said Tuesday in court. "And that is child abuse in its first and primary form."

Fenton said developmental delays in bone have other possible causes, including disease and emotional problems, but he ruled them out based on what he learned about the case from investigators and doctors.

He admitted he had not performed any tests to rule out the other causes.

Also Tuesday, Dr. Joyce deJong, a forensic pathologist at Sparrow Hospital, testified that from about February 2001 to June 2004, Ricky was not growing at a normal rate.

DeJong testified Ricky likely suffered from failure-to-thrive syndrome, but said she could not identify a definite cause.

At Ricky's last documented visit with his psychiatrist in June 2004, Ricky had lost about 7 pounds, deJong said.

The psychiatrist noted that the boy was losing weight, even though "the mother claims he's eating a lot," she testified.

She said a review of Ricky's medical records from the first three years of his life showed his development was normal.

The Hollands became Ricky's foster parents in the fall of 2000, when he was 3.

Aboud questioned deJong's testimony, saying the medical records she used were unreliable and inconsistent.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or kgrasha@lsj.com.

What's next

- A pretrial hearing for Tim and Lisa Holland has been scheduled for Sept. 7. A child abuse expert who reviewed the case for prosecutors is expected to testify. Jury selection in Lisa Holland's trial is scheduled to begin Sept. 11. Tim Holland's trial is set for Jan. 22.

Services set for boy, 2, abused in foster home

August 30, 2006

Funeral and visitation arrangements have been set for Isaac Lethbridge, the 2-year-old temporary ward of juvenile court who was fatally beaten Aug. 16 in a Detroit foster home.

Isaac is survived by his parents, Matt and Jen Lethbridge of Whitmore Lake; his 4-year-old sister who was in the foster home with him; a younger sister in foster care, and five siblings who were adopted by their foster parents through the Washtenaw County Family Court.

Public visitation is Thursday from 2 to 4 p.m. and 6 to 8 p.m. at the Nie Funeral Home, 2400 Carpenter Road in Ann Arbor.

A private funeral is scheduled for Friday.

By Jack Kresnak



Isaac Lethbridge died Aug. 16.

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3 plead guilty in child prostitution case

Girls worked in Washtenaw Co.

BY JOE SWICKARD

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

August 30, 2006

Three key figures in an interstate child-sex ring are facing federal prison terms and fines of \$250,000 after pleading guilty to running teenage girls from Toledo to a Washtenaw County truck stop.

The three Toledo residents include Deric Willoughby, 41, the alleged boss who authorities say the two girls -- ages 14 and 15 -- had to refer to as "Daddy" to demonstrate their obedience and respect. He gave them false identities and birthdays.

Willoughby pleaded guilty Monday to criminal conspiracy and interstate transportation of minors for prostitution. His partners, Brandy Shope, 19, and Jennifer Huskey, 25, pleaded guilty to the same charges.

U.S. Attorney Stephen Murphy III said forcing underage girls into prostitution was an especially horrific crime, and fighting it is "a key goal of my office."

According to investigators and the pleas, the girls, from Toledo, were taken to Willoughby's home last year, where Shope and Huskey told them they would be sex workers. Authorities said the girls were forced to work in Toledo before they were turned over to truck driver Richard Lamar Gordon, who took them to work at a truck stop in Dexter.

Under the plea in the case prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Saima Mohsin, Willoughby and Shope face up to 7 years and 3 months in prison as well as the fine. Huskey faces a maximum sentence of 5 years and 11 months in prison.

Sentencing is scheduled for Dec. 6 before U.S. District Judge Nancy G. Edmunds.

Gordon, 41, of Tennessee is awaiting trial on federal charges that include conspiracy, sex traffic of children and interstate transportation of minors for prostitution.



Molester's sentence sticks

Remorse for raping 9-year-old girl he baby-sat
doesn't sway judge

PUBLISHED: August 30, 2006

By Jameson Cook
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A judge refused to lower the sentence of a 43-year-old who was convicted of molesting a young girl despite a reduction in sentencing guidelines.

Brian Klecha received the same sentence, 11 to 25 years in prison, on Tuesday as he did in July 2005 for having sexual contact and penetration with a girl who was 9 years old in her home.

Klecha was resentenced in Macomb County Circuit Court after his attorney, Patricia Maceroni, in a post-sentencing motion won a reduction of the minimum range of the sentencing guidelines from 126 months to 210 months to 108 months to 180 months.

Judge Mary Chrzanowski issued the identical sentence of 132 months to 300 months that she did originally. The judge remained unwavered by Klecha's apparent extreme remorse for the incident, noting that the victim will suffer for a long time.

"What about her life? What about the poor victim?" Chrzanowski said. Argument in favor of the defendant "does not change the opinion of this court."

The victim's mother spoke to the judge in the courtroom. The girl, now 11 years old, has nightmares and does not seem to be improving with counseling, the girl's mother said.

"He hurt my daughter, she's going to be ruined for the rest of her

life," she said. "I just want him locked up forever."

She said her daughter has said to her parents, "Oh, you want me to get molested again."

Klecha was a friend of the victim's family and had been staying at the house for several months in 2004 when the assaults occurred, prosecutors said.

"He took advantage of a little girl, bottom line," assistant Macomb prosecutor Jurij Fedorak said. "You don't do that to a little girl."

He said part of the reason for the 11-year minimum sentence is so the victim will be 21 when he has his first chance at parole.

Klecha plead guilty to first-degree criminal sexual conduct, which carries a maximum penalty of life in prison. Six other counts against Klecha were dismissed in a plea deal with the prosecution.

Maceroni had argued that in determining guidelines for Klecha, probation officials wrongly penalized him for additional penetrations when there were none proven. Chrzanowski agreed.

Despite the change in the guideline range, the prior sentence remained within them, Fedorak noted.

Maceroni said Klecha has been diagnosed as being bipolar, takes medication and receives counseling. He said he has been a "model prisoner" at Macomb Correctional Facility in Lenox Township.

Klecha gave a statement in court.

"I'm sorry for everything I've done," he said. "I wasn't myself at that time. If I could bring myself back to that time, I would."

Maceroni noted that Klecha pleaded guilty to the most severe charge so he could "spare the child from going through any more trauma" by having to testify in a trial.

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http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/083006/loc_sentence001.shtml



Sex offender put back in jail on new charges

Wednesday, August 30, 2006

By John Agar

The Grand Rapids Press

KENTWOOD -- The rules for some children on Maplelawn Street were simple: run or ride past Donald Lucas' house. Do not stop.

Parents did not trust Lucas, a registered sex offender.

"I was worried about it all the time," a 36-year-old mother said Tuesday. A 25-year-old neighbor said her 6-year-old son "knew not to go to that house."

On Tuesday, they felt relief, yet concern. Lucas was jailed on \$500,000 bond, accused of videotaping a young relative "in various forms of nudity." He also was accused of having video of an unidentified, unclothed child.

Kentwood police raided his house, at 303 Maplelawn St. SE, on Monday night and recovered more than 500 videotapes.

Lucas, aware police were called, set fire to some videos, Chief Richard Mattice said.

Police have reviewed only a limited amount of evidence, which includes the videotapes, Polaroid photos, cameras and video equipment.

"We've got a lot to go through," Mattice said.

Authorities want to know whether images of neighborhood children turn up. Fully clothed children were depicted on some of the videos or photos, police said.

Police investigated after someone with access to Lucas' house told Lucas' ex-wife about videotapes found inside, Mattice said. The ex-wife contacted police.

Lucas' record in Michigan dates to 1982, when he was found guilty of second-degree sexual assault in Kentwood.

In 1995, he was convicted in Ottawa County of contributing to the delinquency of a minor, and assault with intent to commit sexual conduct. He was charged with child pornography, but a judge ruled Lucas' photos, while "disgusting," did not fit the definition.

Deputies found videos and seven grocery bags of photos showing clothed buttocks and crotches of children. They came to light after police investigated allegations Lucas sexually assaulted three neighborhood girls on a camping trip in Hudsonville. Lucas served 154 days in jail after pleading to reduced charges.

In Kentwood, Lucas is charged with producing child-sexually abusive material, a 20-year felony, and possession of child-sexually abusive material, a four-year felony. He is charged as a three-time offender, doubling the potential penalty.

Mattice said Mapletown residents viewed the state's sex-offender registry and were aware of his past.

Neighbors, who didn't want their names used, said they stayed away from Lucas, who worked a third-shift job at a factory. He also cared for a young relative, neighbors said.

The 36-year-old said her daughters could play with the girl, but only at their own house.

"We all knew what he was," she said. "We all told our kids pretty much to stay away from him."

"It's a huge relief," the 25-year-old said. "There's kids everywhere. Everybody was out here (Monday) night talking about it. They ... kept their kids away from him."

Send e-mail to the author: jagar@grpress.com

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Mother accused of having sex with teenager faces prison

Of The Oakland Press

A Farmington Hills mother accused of having sex with a teenage boy faces a minimum prison term of 45 to 75 months if convicted of sexual assault.

Jami Lee Knox, 41, is charged with three counts of third-degree criminal sexual conduct, as well as three counts of using a computer to commit a crime.

The married mother of three appeared before Oakland County Circuit Judge Rae Lee Chabot Tuesday for a pre-trial hearing, during which the judge reminded Knox not to use the Internet or risk violating conditions of her bond.

Assistant Oakland County Prosecutor Rob Giles said Knox, who has pleaded not guilty to the charges, faces prison time if convicted and that she will not be treated differently because she is a woman. He said a preliminary review of the sentencing guidelines showed a minimum term ranging from 45 to 75 months in prison, guidelines that are generally followed by judges.

The guidelines sometimes shift as elements of the crime are debated, though, and judges may deviate if they find a substantial or compelling reason to do so, Giles noted.

He said the case will go to trial if needed.

"If she was a man, there would be no discussion of a plea bargain, so why should we do it in this case?" Giles asked outside of court. "We are not interested in offering a plea bargain. She has to come to grips with what the results will be."

Besides statements to police by Knox as well as from the boy, a

friend of her son, Giles said the evidence against Knox also includes electronic computer communications recovered by investigators.

Knox is free on a \$250,000 personal bond. Chabot reminded her not to use the Internet for her own protection as well as for the alleged victim's. Giles said there was a concern that her family may communicate with the alleged victim's family.

Defense attorney Michael McCarthy said Knox, a homemaker, is supported by her husband, her family, and friends. Several supporters were in court with her.

"She seems to be maintaining her composure quite well under the circumstances," McCarthy said. "He (her husband) has been in court every time."

Knox is accused of having a sexual relationship with the 15-year-old boy for several months earlier this year. The charges came in July after the boy's parents reported suspicions to Farmington Hills police.

Chabot also ordered her to submit to an HIV test, a standard requirement after someone is bound over to circuit court to face trial on a sexual assault charge. Knox waived her preliminary exam in the 47th District Court in Farmington Hills, where she also faces a misdemeanor charge of providing alcohol to a minor. A pre-trial hearing is set for next month.

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THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Parents must be aware of new form of bullying Cyber bullies wreaking harm electronically

Wednesday, August 30, 2006

Most parents of elementary, middle school or high school students can remember a playground bully from their own school days: loud, physically forceful and threatening. Or maybe the bullying was communicated quietly with a menacing glare or a whispered insult between classes.

Today, parents need to add a mostly silent form of potential harm to their children on the preparation list as students enter school for the fall term. It's called cyber bullying, and it's widespread.

A recent national poll led to an estimate that more than 13 million children aged 6-17 have been victims. Here are key findings of the poll of 1,000 students, conducted by Opinion Research Corp. for the nonprofit law enforcement organization Fight Crime: Invest in Kids.

- One-third of teens and one-sixth of children ages 6-11 have been targets of mean, threatening or embarrassing comments online.
- 10 percent of the teens and 4 percent of the younger children were threatened online with physical harm.
- 16 percent of the victims told no one about it. About half of children ages 6-11 told their parents, but only 30 percent of older children informed them.
- Preteens received harmful messages about as often at school as at home. Students aged 12-17 received far more harmful messages at home.
- 17 percent of preteens and 7 percent of teens said they were worried about bullying as they start school again.

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids defines cyber bullying as the use of electronic devices, including cell phones, to send cruel or harmful messages or images about an individual or a group. The cyber bully may be anonymous and offer no respite, communicating abuse to victims around the clock.

Utah Attorney General Mark Shurtleff, who helped announce the poll results, said in a press release that cyber bullying can be a crime. This is far from child's play. All forms of bullying concern law enforcement leaders, who point to research showing that such abusive behavior can lead to more serious criminal activity.

To a child, an unidentified cyber bully can be a frightening adversary. As always, it's up to parents to find out whether the young students in their households are victims or perpetrators - and to bring the problems out in the open. Children deserve that much. Parents must be aware.

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THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Stop cyber bullying

Wednesday, August 30, 2006

- Children should report to their parents, a teacher or the police any messages or postings that are mean, embarrassing or threatening to themselves or other students.
- Parents should insist that every school has a proven anti-bullying program so that students feel safe in their schools and know who to talk to in the event they feel threatened.
- Parents should look for signs that their child might be a victim of cyber bullying, including having nightmares, avoiding school, acting sad or withdrawn, or suddenly showing disinterest in using computers or rapidly switching screens.
- Parents should keep computers used by children in common areas of the home.
- E-mails, chats, text messages including instant messages and Web pages sent or posted by bullies should be saved as evidence.
- Parents should instruct their kids: Don't respond to bullying messages. If the messages continue, take a break and then reply strongly, telling the sender to stop; block or filter further messages; if necessary, change their e-mail address, account, user name or phone number.
- Children should not give out any private information. They should use a screen name different from their e-mail address.
- If children are cyber bullied, families should file complaints with the Internet service provider, cell phone company or Web site. Cyber bullying is typically a violation of the "terms of use," and violators are subject to adverse action.

Source: www.fightcrime.org

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Of children as prey

Wednesday, August 30, 2006

For the past two weeks, the nation's obsessive attention was focused on John Karr, who claimed to be responsible for the murder of JonBenet Ramsey. DNA evidence showed he was not her killer, so charges have been withdrawn. But make no mistake -- there are legions of child predators who, as U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales reminded us all last week, "are looking for someone to hurt."

Gonzales was addressing the 18th annual Crimes Against Children Conference in Dallas. Most news stories picked up on one item from his speech -- a new public service campaign designed to warn teenage girls about the Internet. The campaign, a joint effort of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children and the Ad Council, will start next year.

But, of course, we need not wait until next year to put an exclamation point to the AG's warning. Children of both genders are at risk to Internet-based predators. As the JonBenet Ramsey case illustrates, young girls seem to be at special risk. A growing problem is their tendency to post information on the Internet that can expose them to harm by connecting them to people who would do them harm.

As Gonzalez points out, before the Internet was invented, pedophiles were people who were "isolated, unwelcome even in most adult book stores." But the Internet gave them a community of like-minded people. They bond with each other. The currency of their trade is child porn. Many of them entice minors via the Internet for the purpose of making sexual contact. Gonzalez describes forms of abuse the Internet has enabled that are both sophisticated and previously unimaginable -- including the production of child porn per the customer's fantasy script, at \$600 to \$1,000 per order.

We've all read news stories about young children or adolescents who are lured into relationships with such people. What we may not appreciate is how common it is.

Gonzalez cites one study that shows "one child in every five is solicited online. The TV program "Dateline" estimated that at any given time, 50,000 predators are on the Internet prowling for children."

Here's the enormous danger: At any given time, millions of young people and children are on the Internet too. Many of them are naive and unsuspecting -- potential prey for those who are maliciously portraying themselves as Internet "friends," when in fact they are searching for victims.

Children and adolescents are smart enough to know that the Internet is a wonderful world to explore. They are not smart enough to foresee all the dangers therein. It is up to wary adults to warn, warn and warn them again.

--Jackson Citizen Patriot

Thursday: Downtown progress, and an insurance ruling

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UNINSURED IN MICHIGAN: 11% lack health care coverage in 2005

BY KIM NORRIS
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

August 30, 2006

Susan Squire filed for bankruptcy when the phone calls and threats became unbearable as hospitals tried to collect on the \$92,000 debt she racked up in medical bills from a 2005 heart attack and triple bypass surgery.

The 57-year-old Warren resident didn't have health insurance and didn't see any other option.

"I got phone calls and letters every day. Threats every day," said Squire, who filed for bankruptcy in October. "They didn't care what my financial picture was; they just cared about the money."

Hers is not an isolated experience.

More than 11% of Michiganders -- about 1.13 million people -- didn't have health insurance in 2005, according to figures released Tuesday by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The number increased slightly -- by 1.7% -- over the 2004 figure.

That same report showed that 1 in 6 people nationwide were uninsured.

The number of people living without medical insurance increased 2.9% to 46.6 million in 2005 as the cost of coverage continued to outpace inflation and wage growth.

The negative employment news that has been coming out of some of Michigan's largest companies this year is not reflected in 2005 numbers, although people in the health care field say they think next year's report will show a much different picture.

"We call it the tsunami around here. As Ford and GM close more plants and lay off workers, the problem is only going to get worse," said Sandy Hudson, chief

operating officer for the Detroit Wayne County Health Authority. "We couldn't handle the uninsured problem before this."

The average expense of providing medical care for a family of four grew 9.6% to \$13,382 this year, according to a survey by the Seattle-based Milliman consulting group. The cost of insurance bought through an employer increased 9.2% in 2005 as wages climbed only 3.2%, according to the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation in Menlo Park, Calif.

Because of its union environment, Michigan tends to have a benefit-rich workforce with a high percentage of employers providing health coverage. Nevertheless, employers have been cutting benefits and asking employees to pay more. An increasing number of employers are moving to so-called consumer-director health plans that require workers to pay more out of pocket before employer coverage kicks in.

"As we get into this shifting definition of what health insurance is, we will have to figure out how financially secure Americans really are," said Catherine Hoffman, a senior researcher at the Kaiser Family Foundation.

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Clinics struggle to fill in gaps in health care

Growing ranks of uninsured strain safety net

BY KIM NORRIS

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

August 30, 2006

Alonzo Lacy has been living with asthma for most of his 15 years. For years, his mother, Malisa, has been taking him to a health clinic a few miles from their Inkster apartment where he sees whichever doctor is available.

Every two to three weeks, Alonzo has an asthma attack that sends him to a 24-hour urgent care center or emergency department, where he sees more doctors.

That kind of patchwork approach to health care is difficult for anyone, but for someone with a chronic illness, it's a recipe for failure. Continuity of care is considered one of the foundations to successfully managing health.

"That's the problem," Malisa Lacy said Tuesday. "We haven't had a doctor who can actually help us manage his asthma. Every time it's a different doctor, and they all have a different opinion about how to treat him."

Earlier this month, a potential solution presented itself virtually on the Lacys' front step when a new health center opened right next to their apartment complex.

One of four federally qualified health centers in southeast Michigan, the Western Wayne Clinic exists to provide regular primary care to people who have not had access to it. The guiding philosophy of such clinics is to provide a medical home to people who previously had none and to serve as a safety net for poor and uninsured people.

Such safety nets are becoming increasingly strained as the number of uninsured people continues to climb -- nationally and in Michigan. According to U.S. Census Bureau figures released Tuesday, the number of people in Michigan without insurance rose 1.7% to 11.5% of the population in 2005. More than 1.1 million



Alonzo Lacy, 15, left, and his cousin Nathan Jackson, 17, both of Inkster, fill out forms so they can see a doctor Tuesday at the Western Wayne Family Health Center in Inkster. The clinic, which opened earlier this month, aims to provide continuity of care for its patients. (Photos by AMY LEANG/Detroit Free Press)

people were without health coverage last year.

In Wayne County, there were about 280,000 people without health coverage in 2003, the latest year for which figures are available. Of that total, 180,000 resided in Detroit.

Metro Detroit's four existing federally qualified health centers, which operate 11 locations -- have the capacity to serve about 50,000 people, once the Inkster location is fully operational, expected within a year.

That leaves a gaping hole in the safety net that cannot be plugged by the handful of free clinics and so-called federal look-alike clinics, which don't receive federal dollars to start up, but do receive higher Medicaid reimbursements.

And the hole is not going to be repaired with the addition of new clinics because the federal government has stopped funding new federally qualified centers.

The good news is that the government has diverted that money to expanding existing federally funded health centers so they can increase their capacity and serve more people.

The changes will allow the existing centers to expand, but they don't provide for new centers in an area that desperately needs them, said Sandy Hudson, chief operating officer of the Detroit Wayne County Health Authority.

And existing clinics can only expand if they get more physicians willing to provide health care to people who can't pay.

"That's one of the barriers," Hudson said.

Dr. Angela Ambrosia, who provides care to the Western Wayne medical center's patients, says Alonzo Lacy is a classic example of a patient who can benefit most from having a regular provider.

She lists the steps she and Alonzo could take to get his asthma under control: trying different medication combinations and monitoring his progress, or educating him and his mother on lifestyle choices, such as smoking or having pets.

"His is definitely a solvable problem. That's why we're here," she said. "He could play sports and do everything normally if we get his asthma under control."

Contact **KIM NORRIS** at 248-351-5186 or norris@freepress.com.

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Timing at issue in death of patient

Wednesday, August 30, 2006

By Pat Shellenbarger

The Grand Rapids Press

BIG RAPIDS -- At 7:30 one morning, a nursing home staff member noted in Sarah Comer's chart that she was "alert and cooperative."

But an assistant state attorney general hopes to prove Comer actually died at least an hour and a half earlier, and the note was added later to cover negligence by the staff at the Metron of Big Rapids nursing home.

In the first day of a preliminary examination in Mecosta County District Court, Assistant Attorney General Scott Teter began laying the groundwork to prove Comer, 50, died because her oxygen tank ran empty.

Based on when her last oxygen tank was installed and the volume of flow at which it was set, Comer's tank would have been empty by 5:30 or 6 the morning of Jan. 16, 2005, at least 1 1/2 hours before her chart noted she was fine, Laura Ferrara, the former corporate clinical director for the Cascade Township-based Metron chain, testified.

Ferrara was charged as an accessory after the fact in Comer's death, but state Attorney General Mike Cox dropped the charge.

The home's former administrator, Robert Koch Jr., and Dr. Rudy Ochs, the former medical director and Mecosta County's deputy medical examiner, are among six former employees facing charges in connection with the death and alleged cover-up.

Ochs is facing a separate misdemeanor charge of failing to investigate the death of another Metron of Big Rapids patient, Dorothy Johnson, who died the same day as Comer.

Three nurses and a nursing assistant are facing charges ranging from involuntary manslaughter to failure to report patient abuse in connection with Comer's death.

She instructed Koch to report the two deaths to the state the day the women died, Ferrara said.

But his attorney conceded Koch waited a day.

In coming days, the prosecutor hopes to show that was because the home's staff members hoped to cover up their negligence.

But defense attorneys claim there never was a cover up.

"Never did anyone at anytime say they were going to do anything to conceal information, right?" attorney Chip Chamberlain, representing Koch, asked Ferrara.

"That's right," she answered.

The preliminary examination, which determines if there is enough evidence for a trial, is scheduled through the end of the week and likely will resume a few weeks later.

Send e-mail to the author: pshellenbarger@grpress.com

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Welfare system is broken

FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

MT. MORRIS TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, August 30, 2006

JOURNAL READER

Man, did Christina M. Weaver hit the nail on the head ["Welfare Cadillac? Grocery store cashier says she's seen it all," If You Ask Me, Aug. 13, Page C4].

There is still abuse among EBT card users. Now they just sell their cards and PINs for cash and call and order new ones.

Another thing legislators should look at is the child day care program. What a farce! Most of us who work and have or had children worked full time and had to pay a baby sitter. Now, the state pays the sitter for the clients. And who are the sitters? Grandparents, boyfriends, etc. Why should grandparents get paid to watch their grandkids?

If the state didn't offer payment to them, they most likely would baby-sit for them anyways. But because the state pays for it, they take it. That's our tax dollars at work.

Yes, there is abuse. Just look at the cars, jewelry, nails, hair extensions, etc., of the welfare recipients. Yes, some of the them work. But most are minimum-wage jobs, so how can they afford to drive a Cadillac SUV and wear gold jewelry? My husband and I both work full time and can't afford it on our middle-class income. Something is drastically wrong with our system, and our lawmakers need to see this. The lawmakers in Lansing only see things on paper and not the real-life situations.

Bev Hodge

Mt. Morris Township

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Article published Aug 30, 2006

Man arrested in plot to kill ex-wife

Nick Schirripa

The Enquirer

ITHACA — A Marshall woman is still alive after police foiled her ex-husband's alleged plot to have her killed.

According to Gratiot County Prosecutor Keith Kushion, police arrested David Alan Stark, 44, of St. Louis on Aug. 12 for allegedly trying to hire a former co-worker to kill his 42-year-old ex-wife, who moved to Marshall four years ago after the divorce.

Kushion would not give the woman's name.

"I would rather you not bother her right now," he said.

Kushion said Stark and his ex-wife have at least two sons, ages 16 and 18.

Michigan State Police Detective. Sgt. Steve Benn, at the Ithaca Post, said police contacted Stark's ex-wife immediately after the arrest to tell her what happened.

"She was surprised," he said. "I don't think she expected anything like this."

Stark is being held in the Gratiot County jail in Ithaca on \$400,000 bond, Kushion said, and a not-guilty plea has been entered on Stark's behalf after he waived his preliminary hearing Friday and the circuit court arraignment Monday.

A trial date has not been set.

Kushion said police reported they learned of Stark's alleged plot from the co-worker, who police have identified only as a 40-year-old Ithaca resident.

"The person (Stark) solicited contacted the police because he had been approached before," he said.

Kushion said another meeting was arranged between Stark and the man, and Stark allegedly paid the man \$500 and promised another \$500 after his ex-wife

was killed.

"It was a casual conversation between two people," Benn said. "It really wasn't anything I would describe as filled with anxiety or unusual."

Benn said Stark didn't specify how he wanted his ex-wife killed, and a specific time was not set.

"The conversation was recorded, and Mr. Stark left the friend's residence," he said. "The police had the conversation taped, and after Mr. Stark left, he was pulled over by state police and arrested. I think they heard enough to realize they could make an arrest."

Benn said Stark was calm during and after his arrest, and he refused to make any statements to police.

State police officials speculated in earlier reports that Stark may have wanted his wife murdered because of alimony and child support payments, but Kushion said no clear motive has been determined.

Stark is presumed innocent at this time, Kushion said, but he faces one count of homicide/solicitation of murder, which is a felony that carries a maximum sentence of life in prison.

"The charge is punishable by life or any term of years the court would want to impose," he said. "There's no set minimum."

Nick Schirripa covers Calhoun County and Marshall. He can be reached at 966-0692 or nschirrip@battlecr.gannett.com. Read his blog in the News Extras area at battlecreekenquirer.com.

Detroit man is scheduled to undergo competency exam

He's charged in killings, arson

BY STAN DONALDSON

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

August 30, 2006

A 30-year-old Detroit man accused of killing his girlfriend and infant daughter in Pontiac last month is to undergo a forensic evaluation to determine whether he is competent to stand trial.

Jimmie Reed Jr. is to undergo the examination within the next 60 days at the State Forensics Center in Ypsilanti and will remain in the Oakland County Jail without bond.

Reed was arraigned last month in 50th District Court in Pontiac on felony murder and arson charges in the death of his girlfriend, Markeda Byas, 31, and his 2-month-old daughter, Arctavia Reed. If convicted, he could face life in prison.



Jimmie Reed Jr.

Pontiac police say he shot Byas in the head at the Wind Song Apartment complex in the 1300 block of Bynan Lane on July 20 while she was sleeping with Arctavia. They say he returned the next day, doused the apartment in gasoline, and later set Byas and the baby, who was still alive, on fire.

Police detectives said he killed the pair because he did not want to pay child support and wanted to keep his relationship with Byas a secret from his other girlfriends.

Oakland County Assistant Prosecutor Hala Jarbou, who declined to give specifics on other possible motives, said another court date would not be scheduled until results of the exam become available.

On Tuesday, families of Reed and Byas sat together in court as Reed entered the courtroom in shackles. They declined to speak after the case was adjourned and walked out of the courthouse together.

Sanford Schulman, a defense attorney who was hired by the Reed family, said it is unusual to see the families on such good terms.

"Everyone is getting along and I think it is because they want to see how things play out in court," Schulman said.

Contact **STAN DONALDSON** at 248-351-3691 or sdonaldson@freepress.com.

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This is a printer friendly version of an article from **Lansing State Journal**. To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

Published August 30, 2006

Anthony R. Marrical Jr.: Men have few choices on births

Anthony R. Marrical Jr. lives in Lansing.

Ellen Goodman, in her Aug. 13 column, stated her champagne glass is only half full, as women under 18 are restricted from the morning after pill. She states that this regulation "(solidifies) the message that motherhood is their punishment for sex."

I hope she understands that this is the message sent to all men, regardless of age, with the exception that it is fatherhood as the punishment.

While women have multiple methods of birth control - abortion, adoption, abandonment at a hospital or a fire station and now the morning-after pill - men have the choices of abstinence or taking responsibility for any pregnancy that results under any circumstances.

Vasectomy is not a choice for men who may want to father children in the future as it is not always reversible. Condoms are not a foolproof plan, even when used properly, as shown by Louisiana v. Frisard.

In that case, a woman performed fellatio on a man, collected the semen from the condom, inseminated herself and then the man had to take responsibility for the baby.

A recent Michigan court case perused by Matt Dubay sought post-conception choices for men and was dismissed as "frivolous, unreasonable and without foundation." by U.S. District Judge David M. Lawson. This responsibility-only limitation of men's rights even extends to those under 18 whom Goodman are campaigning for.

In California, in the case of County of San Luis Obispo v. Nathaniel J., a 34-year-old woman committed statutory rape on a 15-year-old boy, and, you guessed it, the boy has to take responsibility for the pregnancy and pay child support.

Perhaps Goodman can set down her "half-full" champagne glass and try to find even an empty one for men to hold up. In today's climate of seeking equal rights for both genders, we need to find a way for men "to be saved from the unhappy choices of an unwanted pregnancy."

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Mayor: City won't lose federal housing money

HOMETOWN HEADLINES

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Wednesday, August 30, 2006

By Robert Snell

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FLINT- Despite a housing official's fears, the city will not lose more than \$600,000 in federal money earmarked for helping low-income people repair their homes, Mayor Don Williamson said.

The city Tuesday agreed

to spend \$793,675 on three contracts, which should

satisfy a Thursday deadline set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The announcement did not provide any information about the contracts.

The announcement came a day after Kate Fields, executive director of the Greater Eastside Community Association, warned the City Council that the city risked losing the money if it went unspent by Thursday.

In October, the city had to give back \$1.4 million in federal money because it missed a deadline to spend the money.

Fields feared the city would miss Thursday's deadline and a Sept. 30 deadline to spend more than \$2.9 million.

Williamson said he believes the city will meet that deadline.

"We fully expect that

all of our HUD funds, now and in the future, will be

utilized efficiently and effectively to provide quality services to our residents," he said.

- Robert Snell

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State closes day care where infant died

Wednesday, August 30, 2006

LaNIA COLEMAN

THE SAGINAW NEWS

State authorities have shuttered a Saginaw Township home day care where an infant died last week.

The state Office of Children and Adult Licensing, a division of the Department of Human Services, announced Tuesday it had issued a suspension order and notice of intent to revoke the license of Gina Danielson, 5481 Brockway.

The action followed the state's investigation into the Aug. 23 death of 10-month-old Charles "Charlie" Bolger.

A Friday autopsy determined the baby suffocated in the straps of a car seat where Danielson placed him for a nap because all of her cribs were in use, authorities said.

The state investigation found violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and administrative rules regarding supervision and sleeping equipment, a state notice indicates.

State regulations require day care centers to provide cribs for all infants younger than 1. Making other arrangements is a common violation, however. State inspection records from the past year show day cares have placed babies in sleeping bags on floors, in portable cribs without proper bedding and in car seats.

The suspension order took effect at 6 p.m. Monday.

Danielson has held a license to care for up to six children in her home since Aug. 28, 2003, state records show. No previous violations appear in her licensing reports.

Danielson was the lone adult providing care for seven children, some of whom are her own, police have said.

Saginaw Township Police Chief Donald F. Pussehl Jr. said the incident does not appear suspicious. "It looks like the baby slid down in the car seat and choked," Pussehl said.

Police said Danielson was "extremely distraught" when emergency crews arrived.

Saginaw County Prosecutor Michael D. Thomas said he is awaiting the final police report before deciding whether to seek charges.

The Saginaw News could not reach Danielson for comment. The child's parents, Frederick and Diane Bolger of Saginaw, have had no comment.

LaNia Coleman covers law enforcement for The Saginaw News. You may reach her at 776-9690.

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JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
governor

State of Michigan
department of human services
Lansing

MARIANNE UDOW
director

News Release

Contact: Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

Michigan Department of Human Services Summarily Suspends the Group Day Care Home License #DG090269473 of Kimberly Anthony

August 29, 2006

The Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) Office of Children and Adult Licensing (OCAL) issued an order of summary suspension and notice of intent to revoke the license of Bay County group day care home provider Kimberly Anthony, 1112 15th Street, Bay City, Michigan. This action resulted from a recent investigation of a complaint of the child day care group home.

The August 25, 2006, complaint investigation found violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and administrative rules regarding supervision, assistant caregivers, and the child care home family. OCAL took emergency action to protect the health, welfare, and safety of children.

Effective 6:00 p.m., August 28, 2006, the Summary Suspension Order prohibits Kimberly Anthony from operating a group day care home at 1112 15th Street, Bay City, Michigan, or at any other address or location. Accordingly, she may not accept children for care after that date and time. The order also requires Ms. Anthony to inform all of the parents of children in her care that her license has been suspended and that she can no longer provide day care.

Ms. Anthony has held a license to operate a group day care home since September 21, 2004. The license was for 12 children.

Michigan law defines a group day care home as a private home in which more than six but not more than 12 minor children are given care and supervision for periods of less than 24 hours a day, unattended by a parent or legal guardian, except children related to an adult member of the family by blood, marriage, or adoption. Group day care home includes a home that gives care to an unrelated minor child for more than four weeks during a calendar year.

For more information, consult DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs.



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
LANSING

MARIANNE UDOW
DIRECTOR

News Release

Contact: Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

Michigan Department of Human Services Summarily Suspends the Family Day Care Home Certificate of Registration #DF730258678 of Gina Danielson

August 29, 2006

The Michigan Department of Human Services, Office of Children and Adult Licensing (OCAL) issued an order of summary suspension and notice of intent to revoke the certificate of registration of Saginaw County family day care home provider Gina Danielson, 5481 Brockway Road, Saginaw, Michigan. This action resulted from a recent investigation of a complaint of the child day care family home.

The August 25, 2006, complaint investigation found violations of the Child Care Organizations Act and administrative rules regarding supervision and sleeping equipment. OCAL took emergency action to protect the health, welfare, and safety of children.

Effective 6:00 p.m., August 28, 2006, the Summary Suspension Order prohibits Gina Danielson from operating a family day care home at 5481 Brockway, Saginaw, Michigan or at any other address or location. Accordingly, she may not accept children for care after that date and time. The order also requires Ms. Danielson to inform all of the parents of children in her care that her certificate of registration has been suspended and that she can no longer provide day care.

Ms. Danielson has held a certificate of registration to operate a family day care home since August 28, 2003. The certificate of registration was for six children.

Michigan law defines a day care family home "as a private home in which 1 but fewer than 7 minor children are received for care and supervision for periods of less than 24 hours a day, unattended by a parent or legal guardian, except children related to an adult member of the family by blood, marriage, or adoption."

For more information, consult DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs.



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News Release

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Wayne County foster youths take STEPs toward career goals

August 30, 2006

LANSING -- More than 100 foster children from Wayne County obtained critical career connections and skills this summer in a pilot internship program conducted by the Department of Human Services. The Summer Training and Enrichment Program (STEP) paired youths soon to be aging out of the foster care system with an organization for a seven-week internship.

STEP is a joint effort of the Michigan Department of Human Services Youth in Transition Program and the Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative. A total of 114 youths participated and were paid a stipend for working about 20 hours a week at 43 different organizations, including the Detroit Tigers and Detroit's Sinai-Grace Hospital. Their duties ranged from assisting with clerical tasks to leading children at summer camp and conducting legal research.

Sinai-Grace Hospital of the Detroit Medical Center placed three student interns in three different units, said Mamie Wells, director of customer and volunteer services.

"These three dynamic young ladies displayed professional behavior, teamwork, accountability and were willing to lend a hand at whatever we asked of them," Wells said. "Their willingness to learn and the right attitude are things that employers really are looking for in new hires."

Recent studies in Wayne County have shown low earning capacity and high poverty rates among youths aging out of foster care. The internships helped youths build connections with local professionals and businesses that will last long after they leave foster care. In fact, 14 of the youth that participated in STEP this summer have now been hired into permanent positions.

Specifically, the STEP program provided the following:

- **Professional skills training:** All youths participated in the Summer Training and Enrichment Academy. This is an intensive, five-day, pre-placement seminar. Through interactive workshops, the participants learned about professional work etiquette, interpersonal communication, conflict resolution, appropriate dress, and making the most of an internship.
- **Professional mentorships:** Youths were placed in a seven-week internship where they received supervision and training from a professional with passion for their work and a desire to share their experience with a young person.
- **On-the-job skills training:** Youths were placed with companies and organizations where they could receive training by professionals that will strengthen skills necessary to embark on a lifelong career.

-MORE-

“My internship has given me confidence and skills for the future,” said Tyesha Williams, 20, of Detroit. “Clerical work is what I want to be doing in the long term.”

Williams was 11 when she entered foster care and had been working as a retail clerk at Target. She accepted an internship for the Detroit Tigers’ Human Resources Department completing clerical tasks such as reviewing background checks of applicants and completing hiring documents. Williams also received switchboard operation training, a critical reason she was asked to remain on staff part time after the internship ended.

“We had a need for people with switchboard operation training so we were able to invite Tyesha to remain on staff as the need permits,” said Karen Gruca, human resources manager for the Detroit Tigers. “We definitely support programs like this and look to participate in the future if it is offered again.”

The employers that participated in the STEP internship program include: Alternatives for Girls; Architectural Salvage Warehouse of Detroit; Association for Children’s Mental Health; Big Brothers Big Sisters of Metro Detroit; The Bing Group; Black Caucus Foundation of Michigan; Black Family Development, Inc.; Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan; Communities in Schools; COTS; Curves at New Center; Detroit Central City Community Mental Health; Detroit Hope Hospital; Detroit Police Department; Detroit Tigers; Don Bosco Hall; Dr. Odeather Hill; Federation of Youth Services; Focus: HOPE; Great Lakes Dock and Door; Hegira Programs, Inc.; Kidz World Child Care Center; Life Directions; Litt Electric; Little Prince and Princesses Childcare Center; Livonia Mall; Make a Difference Community Alliance; Marygrove College; Michigan State Court of Appeals; Michigan State Fair; Mr. G’s Polo Hair and Nail Salon; Paper Plas; Recording Institute of Detroit; Sinai-Grace Hospital; St. John Senior Community Center; The Family Place; ThinkDetroit PAL; Value City; VIP Mentoring; Wayne County Department of Human Services; Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office and Wayne State University Law School.

For more information about youth aging out of foster care, visit the DHS Web site at www.michigan.gov/dhs

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